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THE  
HISTORICAL RELATIONS  
OF  
CHRIST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,  
WITH THE  
PROVINCE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE TWO HUNDREDTH  
ANNIVERSARY OF CHRIST CHURCH,  
NOVEMBER 19, 1895,

BY  
CHARLES J. STILLÉ, LL.D.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
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CHRIST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,  
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PROVINCE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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THE history of the indirect influence of Christ Church upon the lay element in Pennsylvania, in the provincial era, is not as interesting nor as attractive a topic as the ecclesiastical history proper of the Church. The most conspicuous examples of such influence are to be found in the repeated but unsuccessful efforts made by members of this congregation to persuade the King to subvert the Proprietary government, the administration and policy of which they alleged tended to destroy the exercise of their rights and privileges, civil and religious, as free-born Englishmen. On four different occasions at least in seventy years, its members were the leaders of such a movement, and I propose in treating of the topic which has been assigned to me to explain why they adopted such revolutionary measures to destroy the government under which they lived.

The lay element in Philadelphia society in provincial days belonging to the dominant religious sect, may be said to have been for many years unfriendly to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, and it watched the growth in strength and power of Christ Church with suspicion and jealousy. From the beginning there were two parties here: the Church party and the Quaker party. The former contended that its opponent had usurped power not granted by the Charter of the Province, to the mani-



fest injury of the civil and religious rights of other free-born Englishmen. Strange to say, Christ Church although flourishing for more than seventy years in a peaceful community, with absolute freedom of worship, the right to which had never even been questioned by the Quaker rulers of the Province nor by anyone else, was in a very important sense a Church Militant. Indeed, I do not think it is going too far to say that in no American Colony were the Church and those who dissented from it during many years placed in more open and violent antagonism. The Quakers formed for a long time the dominant party in the Province, and Churchmen alleged that it exercised at times its power in such a way as to conflict with the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the members of the *Established* Church. The latter, feeble in number, constantly resorted to the Imperial power in England to maintain what they claimed to be their civil and their religious rights and privileges. They petitioned the King to force the Quaker magistrates to take such oaths of office as were customary and obligatory in England, and to which alone they attributed any binding legal force here. They asked that the juries and witnesses in the courts should come under the same formal obligation, that the right of petition, which they alleged the Quakers had set at naught, should be maintained as sacred, and that they should be forced to place the Province in a state of defence against the pirates and Indians, by whose incursions they were threatened. Feeling that there was little prospect of compelling the Quakers to adopt any such measures of legislation in the Provincial Assembly as the emergency required, they earnestly urged the King to dispossess the Proprietor, to dissolve the existing government, and to govern Pennsylvania henceforth as a Royal Province.





There is a popular opinion that the Provincial Régime in Pennsylvania was marked not only by religious toleration, but by absolute religious freedom; that there was, during this provincial era, a kind of idyllic tranquility and harmony here, resulting from non-interference with the religious rights and opinions of those who did not agree with the ruling party. Those who hold such opinions forget that although William Penn, our founder, was the most enlightened political philosopher of his time, and one of the earliest advocates, since the days of the Emperor Constantine, of absolute religious freedom, none of his successors in office held the same opinions as he. There was not a Quaker among them. They and their Deputy Governors during the whole Provincial Régime were strong adherents of the English Church, as by law established, and in an important sense special patrons of Christ Church. Their notion of other people's religious rights did not extend beyond the protection vouchsafed to Dissenters by the English Toleration Act (so called) of 1689. They held that the Quakers had no special power in this Province to enlarge the indulgence granted by that Act. The history, therefore, of the comparatively small body of Episcopalians here, or of the members of Christ Church (for I use in this paper the terms as equivalent), is a history of strife for objects which we may now think trivial, but which both parties, two hundred years ago, looked upon as fundamental. It is, of course, not pleasant to recall the history of more than seventy years of religious discords but I trust that we are now far enough away from the battle-field to describe its scenes with impartiality and truth. If I am forced to "rake up the ashes of our fathers," I trust that it will not be necessary to disturb them further than to throw light upon the scenes in which they were such conspicuous actors.



By the "great law" adopted by the freemen at Upland in December, 1682, it was provided that "no person now or hereafter living in the Province, who shall confess one Almighty God to be the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the world, and professeth himself or herself obliged in conscience to live peaceably and justly under civil government, shall in any wise be molested or prejudiced for his or her conscientious persuasion and practices ; nor shall be obliged at any time to frequent or maintain any religious worship, place or ministry, contrary to his mind, but shall fully and freely enjoy his or her liberty in that respect without any interruption or molestation." This provision, it will be observed, establishes religious toleration, not liberty.

Before the Charter was granted by the King, it was submitted to the Bishop of London and an amendment was made to it, at his instance, providing that that Bishop should have power to appoint a chaplain for the service of any congregation, consisting of not less than twenty persons, who might desire such a minister. Out of the different interpretation which was placed by the Quakers and by the Church people on this innocent looking provision, arose all the bitterness of the controversy which characterised the relations of these religious bodies during the Provincial era. There never was, it seems to me, a religious dispute in which each side was more sincere in maintaining opposite views. The Quakers insisted that the principal object which Penn had in view in founding the Colony, was to secure a place of refuge and safety for those of his followers who were exposed to persecution in England, and where they might with absolute freedom maintain their creed and practice their profession ; that all acts of the government should be subordinated to carrying out such a scheme, called by its leader "the Holy Experiment," and that any





act of Government, Imperial or Provincial, which interpreted the Charter in any other way, was repugnant to its spirit if not to its letter.

The conditions imposed by law on the power of the Legislative Assembly, and to which they all heartily agreed, were that they should not deny liberty of worship to those who differed from them and should not deny to any one the rights of Englishmen. The Quakers had, of course, the entire control of the legislative body, and they practically determined how far the privilege granted by the Charter extended. In their early legislation here they made what turned out to be (as Penn had tried in vain to convince them) a serious mistake, and that was by sometimes acting as if this was a Quaker colony exclusively, possessed of certain privileges to which, as refugees and as Quakers, they considered themselves entitled, and to which all the inhabitants must conform; and not, as it really was, in law and in intention, a colony of free-born Englishmen, all of whom were entitled to the privileges granted by the Charter, as well as those common law rights of Englishmen which they had not forfeited by crossing the sea, whether they belonged to the Society of Friends or not. In those days a limited toleration, strictly laid down by a formal statute, was the only one which was recognized by English or Provincial law. The natural right to religious liberty, as it is now called, was not asserted, except by a stray philosopher, until the period of our Revolution. Toleration in that era meant simply an exemption from the penalties which had been imposed upon Dissenters from the Established Church by various statutes which had been enacted since the Reformation.

The utmost limit of that toleration was reached by a statute of the first year of William and Mary, 1689, com-



monly called "the Toleration Act," which relieved certain Dissenters, including Quakers who took the Test and made the Declaration against certain Roman Catholic dogmas, from penalties to which at the time they were amenable. The early legislation here of the Assembly, professed to give a wider or freer toleration than that granted in England by that Act. *Hinc illae lacrymae.*

The English Churchman in this Province, and especially the English clergyman sent here by the Bishop of London, regarded all these pretensions of the Quakers as unfounded, illegal and extravagant. The clergyman when ordered here for duty by the Bishop of London might be a poor missionary, but he was a member of what he called the Established Church in America, and he brought with him, in his opinion, the whole power of that Church, with all the rights and immunities with which it was clothed in England. He had a lofty conception of the inherent dignity of his office. The Bishop of London was his lawful superior, he alone having jurisdiction over him, and in his church courts alone could he be called upon to account for any offence in which the rights of conscience or his rights as a clergyman were involved. The tenure of his office was life-long; his congregation and his vestry had no control either in choosing or deposing him. With many of the clergy sent to this country, it was a favorite maxim that vestries were useless bodies, and they held to the old-world doctrine that the clergy should be supported by the State; if not directly by tithes, then by setting apart large tracts of land, the income of which should be reserved for their support. In a word, for many years they held that any action of the Provincial Government which interfered with their status and privileges here, as members of the Established Church of England, as settled by the statutes





of the realm, should be disallowed by the Privy Council ; hence the frequent appeals on their part to the Imperial Government, asking not merely that such action should be declared illegal and void, but that the Proprietary Government should be abolished as incurably bent on setting aside their privileges, which they claimed as absolute in English law.

With claims such as these, and with the feeling of superiority to their fellow-colonists begotten of those claims, it is not to be wondered at that any act of the Quaker majority of the Assembly, which seemed to dispute their validity, should be severely criticised and opposed by the Episcopal clergy. It is perhaps not too much to say that the Churchmen from the beginning, under the lead of Colonel Quarry, the Judge of Admiralty, and the most conspicuous member of the vestry of Christ Church, were anxious to substitute a Royal for a Proprietary Government, but they were ready, before the controversy was closed, to avow that it was their purpose to contend for it. In the meantime, a most uncomfortable feeling existed between the parties, and, any act of the majority which could be construed to constrain the actions of Churchmen in any way, seemed likely to kindle into a consuming flame the spirit of discord which grew apace with the growth of Christ Church.

But the clergy were not the only complainants ; murmurs of dissatisfaction were heard among those of the laity, who were not Quakers, that the legislation of the Quaker Provincial Assembly was inconsistent with the Charter and the safety of the Province. No proper preparation, it was alleged, was made to protect the inhabitants against the pirates in Delaware Bay, the French and Indians, the Test Oath was made more indulgent in its terms than had been prescribed by Parliament and a general



disposition, it was said, was shown to govern the Province on Quaker principles, not on those distinctively English.

To those who have looked on William Penn as the apostle of toleration, it seems indeed strange that the very first complaint made by the vestry and congregation of Christ Church against the legislation of the Assembly and the action of the magistrates under it, was that it violated the civil and religious rights of these Englishmen, inhabitants of the Province, who were not Quakers. Yet such was the charge brought before the Privy Council. Within ten years after the settlement of the Province, George Keith, at one time a most zealous Quaker and a very learned man, but who afterwards became a very active church missionary, denounced the leaders of his former friends in a manner, which, to put it mildly, constituted the serious offence (as the Quakers considered it and had so declared by a Provincial statute), of "speaking evil of dignities." For this offence Keith was brought before the magistrates (many of whom were members of the Ecclesiastical Meeting, a tribunal which had deposed him from his membership in the Society), and being somewhat bullied by them, he lost his temper and abused his judges in his turn. For this he was nominally condemned to pay a fine, but the Churchmen chose to consider his sentence as really that of an apostate, and not merely the punishment meted out to an offender against the statute which prohibited speaking disrespectfully of the Government or its officers. His friends, and especially Churchmen, took up his cause with zeal, and as they had no hope of relief from the Provincial Government, they went to the root of the matter and sent a petition to the Imperial Government, begging it to depose that of the Proprietary. They insisted that Keith had been tried by a tribunal which had no legal authority whatever,





the judges never having been qualified for their office by taking either the oath or affirmation then required of all officials by the Imperial Government. They insisted, too, that Keith had really been condemned for an ecclesiastical, not for a civil offence, and thus that the rights of non-Quakers were put in jeopardy. These charges, which accused the authorities of a flagrant usurpation of power, were formally laid before the Privy Council in England. At the same time it was alleged that the Quakers, owing to their conscientious scruples about war, had taken no measures to protect the shores of Delaware Bay from the incursions of pirates. As William Penn was probably thought by the new sovereigns to be something of a Jacobite, owing to his favor with James II, he was suspended from his government, which was handed over temporarily to Governor Fletcher, of New York. Thus it would appear that the lay element of the Church here, even before the formal organization of Christ Church, was strong enough to induce the English Government to revolutionize the administration, mainly on the ground that the rights of non-Quakers were not adequately protected by the action of the Provincial Assembly which the Quaker majority controlled.

It is difficult, I confess, to understand with our present notions of religious liberty, how the Churchmen, possessing, as they did, freedom of worship and the absolute control of the property belonging to their Church, could have made any complaint on that score of a violation of the religious rights of those who were non-Quakers. However this may be, it was evident that the Provincial Assembly did not learn wisdom from experience. In 1698, after the Proprietary Government had been restored, the magistrates continued their prosecutions against those who attacked the Provincial Government, and their opponents asked that the



King should take them under his special care. A petition to the Crown requesting that such a change should be made was denounced by the Provincial Magistrates as seditious, and its supposed author was arrested and condemned for violating the statute making it a penal offence to speak disrespectfully of the Government and its officers. To this was added by the non-Quakers a protest against a statute passed in 1700, substituting a new form of test in the room of that which had heretofore been in force by virtue of the Toleration Act, by which the Quakers here were granted a toleration which did not exist in England. All these measures were protested against by the vestry of Christ Church as an invasion of what they called their religious rights as members of the Church of England. They sent a second time a petition to the Privy Council by Colonel Quarry, asking that some remedy for their grievances should be found. So great was the influence of this then feeble Church with the Imperial authorities, that they were again led to interpose, and orders were sent out here in 1702 requiring that hereafter all persons who wished to celebrate their worship publicly or to hold any office under the Provincial Government without exposing themselves to the law against non-conformity, should be obliged to make a declaration of fidelity and allegiance to the sovereign and to take the Test; that is, make a declaration of their disbelief in certain Roman Catholic Dogmas in the exact form provided by the Toleration Act. There was at first considerable hesitation here in taking this Test, not that there was any objection to the doctrines it avowed, but the objections were as to the form of the affirmation required. The Assembly was induced in 1705, by what influence I have never been able clearly to understand, to embody in a statute provisions requiring all persons in the Province





to qualify themselves for taking any office by taking and subscribing the Test and affirming their belief in the Declaration as an indispensable qualification before assuming its duties. This Act, which is simply a copy of the English Toleration Act, remained in force up to the time of the Revolution, and it seems to have settled the vexed question how far any one could go astray from the orthodoxy required by the Imperial Government and yet hold office, by pleading that another standard had been set up by the Assembly of the Province. The policy which provided that these Tests should prevail in Pennsylvania was in strict imitation of the widest form of toleration then known in England. If we wish to trace the influence of Christ Church on the lay element during the Provincial era, not only here but in England, we cannot do better than consider carefully the part that she took in this otherwise profitless controversy, and for that reason I have called attention to these long-forgotten quarrels. I have alluded to them here only because they jeopardized the existence of the Proprietary Government.

At this time (1705) the congregation consisted of about five hundred members, and the number of persons in the Province who were Episcopalians was constantly increasing. Mission Churches were established at Chester, Oxford, Radnor, New Castle and Dover, which were served by clergymen sent out by the Venerable Society. And as they secured a firmer footing in the Province, the fear which had oppressed the earliest members of the Church that they would perish from their own weakness, gave way to a more hopeful spirit. Still, as late as 1718, the friends of the Church, both here and in England, endeavored to persuade Sir William Keith, the most popular of the Proprietary Governors, and the one least inclined to stretch his



prerogative, to make an effort to secure permanent legal support for the Church. His answer tells the whole story in a single sentence. "I agree with you," he says, "that the Church should be endowed by the Province, but what can I do for such an object with an Assembly composed of twenty-five Quakers and three Churchmen."

As time passed on the controversial spirit became less bitter, and indeed differences of opinion grew less marked as people knew each other better. Churchmen became less exclusive and welcomed here in this Church the ministrations of the Swedish Lutheran clergyman who had charge of the Swedish Mission here. For many years the services of the Church were in charge at different times of Rudman, Sandel, Lidman, Hesselius and Lindenius, who were recognized as in full communion with the Church of England, although they had been ordained by the Archbishop of Upsal and not by the English Bishops. As one remarkable result of this fraternal spirit, and as illustrating how the influence of this Church extended beyond its borders, I may remind you that four churches originally Swedish in this State, one in Delaware and one in New Jersey, became, at different times, by the almost unanimous vote of their congregations, constituent members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

In speaking of the influence of the members of this congregation on public affairs during the Provincial era, I must not forget to claim for some of them the great honor of having been the founders and the early guardians of the College and Academy of Philadelphia. Dr. Franklin, who first conceived the plan of this establishment, and sought with characteristic vigor to organize it by securing money for its endowment and selecting its professors, was a pew-





holder in this Church, although he disclaimed any intention of making the College a Church institution. He preferred that in a Province such as this, it should rest upon what was called in those days the "broad bottom," that is, that it should be independent of the control of any Church or denomination. But when he looked around for those who would appreciate and support his project, he was obliged to take from this Congregation mainly the men of education and of means who would aid him. His first choice for Rector or Head Master of the Academy was the Rev. Richard Peters, one of the most scholarly men in the Province, who had long held the important place of Secretary of the Land Office and afterwards for nearly ten years was the Rector of Christ Church. Finding it impossible to induce Mr. Peters to accept the place, he made the final choice of Rev. William Smith, a man of indomitable energy, of very considerable learning and of great organizing power. Mr. Smith was an Episcopal clergyman of high reputation, and, as far as a man in his position could be, he was a member of this Congregation. He gave life and vigor to the skeleton plan which Dr. Franklin had sketched out. His experience as a teacher and his various learning led him afterwards into paths where Dr. Franklin could not follow him, yet his scheme of college education, in accordance with the universal judgment of scholars, for more than a hundred years formed the true model for the liberal training of young men in this country. He induced the Trustees of the Academy, shortly after his induction, to solicit from the Proprietaries a charter for a College, and, this obtained, he established as a means of instruction in this institution a *curriculum* of studies which formed the basis of education afterwards followed by every college in this country professing to give a liberal



training to young men. The result of the life and vigor which he had infused into the College which he had created, was, in the opinion of the late Dr. George Wood, such, that in a short time this College, founded by two of your members, "was perhaps unrivalled and certainly not surpassed by any seminary at that time existing in the Provinces." And I may add, that had it escaped from the mischievous designs of unscrupulous politicians during the Revolution, and had its affairs since that era always been managed with the same self-sacrificing devotion and fidelity to its interests exhibited by its Trustees before that change, it would doubtless to-day occupy the same proud pre-eminence. Of the Trustees previous to the Revolution nearly four-fifths were members of this Congregation, and this was the period when its work was most active and the demands on their enlightened care incessant. Mr. Peters, the Rector of the Church, was for many years the President of the Board, and the Trustees, agreeing with Dr. Smith as to the plan of education which had been adopted, and disagreeing wholly, much to his chagrin, with that urged by Dr. Franklin, supported fully their Provost, not only in all his efforts for the promotion of higher education here, but in all the various trials and difficulties into which his eager and impetuous temper led him. Dr. Smith was a strict Churchman for those days, as were doubtless the majority of the Trustees of the College, but they ever maintained its original design by selecting as its professors men who represented the various denominations in the city. One of the more immediate good results of the establishment of this College, was the training of men who occupied a prominent position as ministers of Christ Church at the outbreak of the Revolution. William White, Jacob Duche and Thomas Coombe were all gradu-





ates of the College of Philadelphia and received their training from Dr. Smith.

Between the years 1740 and 1756 there was perpetual fear of war and an invasion of this Province by the Indians and French, who had formed what was intended to be a permanent alliance, and had established themselves on the line between Pittsburgh and Lake Erie. The object of the invasion on the part of the French was supposed by many who thought themselves wise, to be part of a systematic scheme to subjugate the English colonists on the borders of the Atlantic, in this and other Provinces; to make them dependencies of France, and, worse than all, to force, by persecution, the inhabitants to become Roman Catholics. However chimerical all these fears may appear to us now, there is no doubt of the reality of the anxiety and apprehension which they excited at the time. To the intensity of the desire to make some adequate military preparation to defend themselves, was added the natural dread of contending with such a nation as France, when no means of defence had been made ready, as well as a special horror of the practices of the savage and inhuman warfare of the Indians. Those who had now combined against us were the descendants of those whom William Penn on his arrival had found so friendly—the Delawares and the Shawnees, who had been made desperate by the cruel and fraudulent appropriation of their lands by his successors. Gentle as lambs when the white man first came among them, they had become fiends now, as all the accounts of their cruel massacres of the inhabitants clearly showed. The settlers in the territory exposed to these ravages called loudly upon the Government for protection and succor. Although the deepest sympathy was expressed on all hands for their unfortunate condition, no troops were sent



to defend them, owing to the quarrel between the Governor and the Assembly as to the best mode by which the soldiers and the money for their support should be raised. The Governor, to state the nature of the controversy in a single sentence, urged that a Militia Bill, which should enroll as many of the able-bodied men of the Province as might be needed, should be passed, and that a tax should be levied for their pay and equipment from which the immense private estates of the Proprietaries should be exempted; while the Assembly contended that the necessary force should be raised by a voluntary enlistment, and that loans should be issued to raise money, to be reimbursed by general taxation, for the maintenance of the troops. For many years this wearisome and profitless struggle continued and nothing was done in the way of defence of the frontier or to avert the threatened danger of invasion. The Governor and the Proprietary party insisted that the refusal to adopt his suggestions was owing to conscientious scruples on the part of the Quakers about making war, but so untrue was this charge that the Assembly, goaded into action by Braddock's defeat in July, 1755, consented at last to exempt the estates of the Proprietaries from taxation, in consideration of a gift by them to the Province of five thousand pounds, and established a chain of forts from the Delaware to the Maryland frontier along the Alleghany Mountains, garrisoned by a body of volunteers, Provincial troops, who for a long time effectually guarded the threatened districts. In this controversy the larger number of the members of this congregation sided with the Proprietary party, having convinced themselves that no Assembly in which the Quakers had a majority of the votes would, under any circumstances, adopt warlike measures. They went so far on this account





as to join with the Presbyterians, who had suffered most severely from the Indian raids after Braddock's defeat, in a petition to the Crown, being the third time in which they had made the same application, asking that Quakers should not be permitted hereafter to sit as members of the Assembly. Their action must be attributed to a deep-rooted delusion on the subject, which then prevailed here, and which perhaps the professed principles of the Quakers had done much to foster, and to the natural anxiety which they felt to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of a neglect of the safety of the Province.

But during the years of danger which threatened their safety, when the accounts from the West told of little but of Indian outrages and French victories and marches eastward, the conduct of this congregation was marked by a manliness and courage and readiness to make sacrifices for the safety of the Province, worthy of all praise as an example, and to which those who succeed them here may point with becoming pride. They were taught from this pulpit the Christian duty of warfare in defending themselves. Dr. Smith tells us that in this crisis he preached here no less than eight military sermons, as he calls them, and we may be quite sure that in them the duty of defending their lives and their homes from a French and Indian invasion was duly inculcated. We may be also certain from what we know of the membership of Christ Church at that time, that the men on whom the Governor most fully depended at that critical time for the safety of the Province, were to be found among those who gathered here to worship God. The military spirit which prevailed in the congregation was so marked that, in 1758, at the opening of the campaign of that year General Forbes, commander of the army in this Province, could find no



better means of rousing the military ardor of the inhabitants than by asking Dr. Smith to denounce here once more the horrible cruelties which his army was sent to avenge.

During the eventful years (1740-1756) in which the Province was forced to defend itself from the incursions of the Indians to the westward, none of the inhabitants who formed social organizations were more zealous and steady in upholding the hands of those to whom were committed the safety, honor and welfare of the people of this Province, than the members of this congregation. Opinions might differ, and doubtless often did, among them in regard to the righteousness of the conduct of the agents of the Government in their treatment of the Indians, but when these savages determined to wreak their vengeance by an indiscriminate slaughter of the inhabitants, the law which Churchmen invoked was that of self-defence. At that time the members of Christ Church succored the distressed inhabitants west of the Susquehanna by timely gifts, and they urged the immediate necessity of raising money and men to protect them, profiting by the lessons which they had learned, as I have stated, from this pulpit as to the clear duty of the citizen and the Christian. At that time the special interest which the members of this Church could feel as Episcopalians in the sufferings of those exposed to Indian assaults was centered in a feeble mission of the Venerable Society, of which the headquarters were at Carlisle. But the sympathy exhibited by them in this city for the victims of savage cruelty was not bounded by any such narrow frontier. Judging from the names attached to a petition to the Crown in 1756, praying that hereafter no non-resistant Quaker should be permitted to hold a seat in the Assembly, the members of this congre-





gation were the most determined of those who were willing to undergo any revolutionary change in government which would guarantee that the white population of the Province should be duly protected.

There were many officers, members and pew-holders in Christ Church in the regiments raised by the government of the Province for service during the French and Indian wars. General James Irvine, who was a prominent member of this congregation, and is traditionally remembered from his always appearing clad in mourning on Good Friday, began his military career as an officer in Bouquet's expedition for the recapture of Fort Duquesne, and was during the Revolution an officer of high rank in the Pennsylvania Line. Among others, we find the well-known names of Colonels Thomas Lawrence, Edward Jones and Turbutt Francis; of Lieut.-Colonels Thomas Yorke and James Coultas; of Major Samuel McCall; of Captain Thomas Bond; of Lieutenants Lynford Lardner, William Bingham, Atwood Shute, James Claypoole and Plunket Fleeson.

It is not to be forgotten that the social position of many of the members of this Parish (the united Churches of Christ and St. Peter's) gave them an influence out of all proportion with their numbers. It is true, of course, that in the Provincial era the laymen of this Church were, generally speaking, of the Proprietary party, and had supported the war measures of that party; but when they found that the government of the Province had become that of a deputy, without whose consent no legislation could be enacted, and who was bound in his acts to obey the instructions of the Proprietaries in England, and who was in no way responsible to the people of the Province for them, they joined with other parties in the Assembly





in unanimously declaring, in 1763, that pretensions such as these were as dangerous to the prerogatives of the Crown as they were to the liberties of the people. Proprietary men as they were supposed to be, they had no hesitation in praying the King, for the fourth time, with Dr. Franklin, in 1764, that he would resume the government of the Province and that the Proprietary system should be abolished.

The signs of the times became more portentous after the enactment of the Stamp Act of 1765, and it soon became apparent that there would be as much opposition here on the part of the Churchmen to Imperial misgovernment, as there had been to the arbitrary pretensions of the Governors. Indeed, it is hardly worth proving that during these perilous times all classes of people in Pennsylvania, resistants and non-resistants alike, protested against the Ministerial measures. The members of this congregation, in common with their fellow-citizens of other beliefs, remonstrated against the Stamp Act and the Tea Act, as well as against the Boston Port Bill and other measures intended to punish the town of Boston; they all signed the Non-importation and the Non-exportation Agreements; they all petitioned the Crown to guarantee the right of self-government; they determined to maintain the fundamental rights of the colonies; they warned the Ministry that armed resistance would be made to further encroachments, and they did not hesitate to vote for raising men and money for the defence of the Province after the battle of Lexington. Yet with all this, they never ceased to hope that some peaceful settlement of the dispute might be made and that no violent separation from the Mother Country would take place. As the crisis of the Revolution approached, the opinions held by the congregation as to the course they

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would take, are best expressed in the letter of their clergy to the Bishop of London. In this letter, dated June 30, 1775, the clergy of this parish, Messrs. Richard Peters, Jacob Duché, Thomas Coombe, William Stringer and William White, join with Dr. Smith, the Provost of the College, in saying to the Bishop of London, "All that we can do is to pray for such a settlement and to pursue those principles of moderation and reason which your Lordship has always recommended to us. We have neither interest nor consequence sufficient to take any great lead in the affairs of this great country. The people will feel and judge for themselves in matters affecting their own civil happiness, and were we capable of any attempt which might have the appearance of drawing them to what they think would be a slavish resignation of their rights, it would be destructive to ourselves as well as to the Church of which we are ministers. But it is but justice to our superiors, and to your Lordship in particular, to declare that such conduct has never been required of us. Indeed, could it possibly be required, we are not backward to say that our consciences would not permit us to injure the rights of the country. We are to leave our families in it, and cannot but consider its inhabitants entitled, as well as their brethren in England, to the right of granting their own money; and that every attempt to deprive them of this right will either be found abortive in the end or attended with evils which would infinitely outweigh all the benefits to be obtained by it. Such being our persuasion, we must again declare it to be our constant prayer, in which we are sure that your Lordship joins, that the hearts of good and benevolent men in both countries may be directed towards a plan of reconciliation worthy of being offered by a great nation that have long been the patrons





of freedom throughout the world, and not unworthy of being accepted by a people sprung from them and by birth claiming a participation in their rights."

The sentiments frankly expressed in this letter were not merely those of the clergy of Christ Church, but it voiced doubtless the opinion of its lay members, as well as that of a large circle of friends not of their religious faith, but within the sphere of their influence. In a community such as Philadelphia then was, it is not easy to overestimate the power derived from the common opinion on a momentous question of its foremost citizens. Men like William Bingham, Richard Bache, Benjamin Chew, John Cadwalader, Gerardus Clarkson, Redmond Conyngham, Manuel Eyre, Michael Hillegas, Archibald McCall, Charles Meredith, Edmund Physick, William Plumstead, Samuel Powel, Edward Shippen, Richard and Thomas Willing, never speak in vain. These are names as familiar to those who have passed a long life in Philadelphia as household words, and those who bore them were all members of the congregation of Christ Church. This letter to the Bishop of London doubtless reveals that feeling of mingled defiance and dread with which they viewed the approach of the Revolution.

Of these clergymen of the Church here, it may be said that Messrs. White and Duché became afterwards chaplains of the Continental Congress, and that Dr. Smith urged, in a powerful sermon delivered before Colonel Cadwalader's regiment of Volunteer Associators in this Church, the right and duty of armed resistance if the grievances complained of were not redressed. At that time (the early period of the Revolution) it is hardly necessary to say that there was no question of independence, for no public man in Pennsylvania, within or without Christ Church, had



advocated such a measure. When the time arrived when it was thought necessary by Congress to proclaim our independence, no less than three of the signers of that immortal instrument, Franklin, Robert Morris and Hopkinson, were found to be pew-holders in this Church. And on the very day on which that great charter of a new nation was signed, it was agreed by the vestry and clergy of this Church that the long-familiar prayer for the King and the Royal Family should thenceforth be omitted from the service. In short, in no quarter was the action of the Assembly of the State and of Congress dissolving our allegiance to Great Britain more loyally obeyed than in this Church, to which kings and queens in happier days had been loving nursing fathers and nursing mothers.

With the close of the Revolution that direct and peculiar influence of Christ Church upon the lay element in Philadelphia, which, during the Provincial era, had been so characteristic a feature of its corporate life, in a great measure ceased. Whether this was due to changes which then brought into power men of a very different social position and very different political ideas from those who had governed this community in former days, I will not stop to inquire. Whatever may have been the cause, there can be no doubt in the mind of any student of our history that Quakers and Episcopalians, the foremost citizens of the Province, however faithful they may have been to the changes produced by the Revolution, lost their prestige and political leadership in the Commonwealth created by it.

Thenceforth Christ Church entered upon a new era, and devoted herself to the propagation exclusively of that special form of Christianity of which she had been the recognized representative here. Under the guidance of that wise, discreet, revered and saintly man who was then





her Rector and was soon afterwards to become the chief pastor of this diocese, she became in a very important sense, *omnium ecclesiarum mater et caput*.

Bishop White, I need not say, was not only a great Churchman, but he was a great citizen also. From the stormy days of the Revolution, when he taught Congress that resistance to oppression is a religious duty; from the day in which in his study in St. Peter's house in this city he outlined a plan for the Federal Union of the Church, down to the day when he was laid at rest under the chancel of this Church, the great work of his life was, so to speak, the naturalization of the order and discipline of the Protestant Episcopal Church under its new conditions in this country. What measure of success attended his efforts it is not my province to speak of, but I may venture to affirm that the Church in this country can never be too grateful for what she owes to his wisdom and sagacity. He is the great link which binds the past to the present. He was the champion of all that is true and noble and inspiring in the history of that form of Christianity of which he was here the chief minister, and to no wiser hands could the great task of adapting that historical and venerable form of ecclesiastical polity to our present need have been confided than to his.

I count it as one of the happiest recollections of my youth that I should have been permitted to see Bishop White in the last year of his life, not robed in his canonical vestments nor surrounded by those things calculated to impress a boyish imagination with the dignity of his position, but walking these streets in the ordinary dress of a clergyman of that day. His tall, spare figure, his costume, that of a gentleman of the old school, the broad-brimmed hat which half concealed his flowing white locks,



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his ample coat, his short clothes, his long stockings and buckled shoes, and his stout walking staff—all these things made him truly venerable in my eyes and produced an impression which the lapse of sixty years has not removed. As he passed along, supported on the arm of his grandson, I remember that I looked upon him, as I had ever been taught to regard him, as the last of the Revolutionary patriots. To those who met him and knew anything of his history and character, he was the type and exemplar of that pure and lofty doctrine which he had preached all his life. His perfect sincerity, his genuine simplicity, his boundless charity of act and opinion towards those who differed from him, caused him to be recognized, as was well said by a distinguished divine of another communion than his, as “truly the Bishop of us all.”

With such a history and with such personages serving as illustrations of it, Christ Church is not merely a temple where men have met during the last two hundred years to worship God after the manner of their fathers, but it is also one of the brightest jewels in the mural crown of this godly city. Here men have been taught during all that long period, not merely their duty to God, but also to consecrate the service of their lives to the welfare of their fellow-men, and especially to that of our own community and Commonwealth. As we recall the names of its members who in times past, amidst trials and obstacles of all sorts, have done their duty, while doing the State some service, may we emulate their example, never failing to heed the voice of God and our country when it calls upon us for work and self-sacrifice.















